

Information, Dissemination and Marketing Program

The Information, Dissemination and Marketing Program aims to improve public understanding and inform the policy process about factors affecting marital and family wellbeing through:

- the timely documentation of Institute research findings in widely accessible and professionally produced publications;
- the extensive dissemination of research and other findings and the provision of efficient support for Institute-hosted conferences and seminars;
- the provision of a comprehensive national information resource on family-related matters;
- the development of appropriate information products and services for the use of researchers, government and the community;
- the provision of a network and resources to support the National Child Abuse Prevention Strategy;
- the provision of a network and resources to support the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy Communication Project.

Publishing

The Publishing unit documents Institute research findings and other family-related research in Australia and overseas in a variety of publications designed for the widest possible audience. Institute work informs: governments, for use in policy review; the academic community, for research and teaching purposes; the 'helping' professions, for their work with and for families; and the wider community, to assist their understanding of family and societal change.

The publishing program includes the Institute's flagship publication and primary dissemination medium *Family Matters*, and a range of titles published under the Institute imprint or in conjunction with other organisations and commercial publishing houses. In addition, research undertaken by Institute staff, or by external researchers using Institute data, is commonly published in journals and conference proceedings, or appears in major Institute reports. Staff publications are listed by author name in Section 6 of this Annual Report.

Family Matters

Family Matters is the Institute's research journal, produced in magazine format. Published three times a year (Winter, Spring/Summer and Autumn), *Family Matters* informs its local and international readership about Institute and other family-related research. Acceptance of all *Family Matters* articles is subject to a formal review process.

The content reflects a balanced mix of articles and includes: research papers; regular columns on family research in Australia and overseas; diverse perspectives and analyses of family-related research and policy options; regular informational columns, including an occasional column reporting on Family Court activities; a 'book notes' section on recently released publications and other material received by the Institute; and a comprehensive listing of forthcoming family-related conferences, seminars and workshops. The journal strives to maintain high quality reader-friendly text,

with the design and format meeting the highest professional standards.

In 1997–98, in accordance with Institute policy, *Family Matters* continued to publish the work of external authors as well as report directly on Institute work.

- *Family Matters* no.47, Winter 1997, featured articles presenting new findings from the Institute's Australian Family Life Course Study, on cohabitation and marriage relationships, and from the Institute's Later Life Families Study on the experiences and expectations of older couples aged 50–70 years. Other feature articles looked at the aspirations of migrant adolescents and parents, from the Institute's Australian Living Standards Study, and social polarisation in a suburban community – the fourth in a series of articles from the Newtown Revisited Project.
- *Family Matters* no.48, Spring/Summer 1997, with its focus on family values, featured an article on the role of fathers relative to mothers and friends as confidants for adolescents, which reported findings from the Institute's Australian Living Standards Study. Also included was a paper on the influence of family relationships on later life, from the Institute's Later Life Families Study, and an article on work and family values, preferences and practice, from the Institute's Australian Family Life Course Study.
- *Family Matters* no.49, Autumn 1998, featured papers on the theme of children and young people. Included were feature articles on the social environments and the emotional wellbeing of young

people, the geographies of exclusion and young people's perceptions and use of public space, and adolescents' perceptions of self, work and future.

New Releases

In addition to three editions of *Family Matters* and the *1996–97 Annual Report*, the following publications were released during the year.

Working Papers

The Working Paper series is designed to enable the rapid dissemination, during the course of a project, of Institute research findings to practitioners, policy makers and the research community, in order to encourage dialogue with research and policy communities and thus obtain review and feedback about the nature, direction and quality of Institute research.

- *Social Polarisation and Housing Careers: Exploring the Interrelationship of Labour and Housing Markets in Australia*, Working Paper no. 13, by Ian Winter and Wendy Stone. The paper draws on data from the Institute's 1996 survey of a national random sample of 2685 respondents aged 25–70 years to examine access to home ownership in the context of changing labour market opportunities. By exploring the interrelationship of labour and housing markets, the paper investigates whether home ownership in Australia continues to play a role in social redistribution.

- *Families in Later Life: Dimensions of Retirement*, Working Paper no. 14, by Ilene Wolcott. The paper, based on data collected from the Institute's 1996 Later Life Families Study, explores aspects of retirement and family relationships in the lives of men and women aged 50–70 years. The linkages between family circumstances and retirement expectations and experiences are related to policy implications for the provision of a range of government benefits and community services.

Briefing Papers

The Australian Family Briefing series is designed to present information about research findings to relevant key audiences in a form that is succinct, timely, policy-relevant and media-friendly.

- *Work and Family Values, Preferences and Practice*, Australian Family Briefing no. 4, by Helen Glezer and Ilene Wolcott. The paper presents initial findings from the Institute's Australian Family Life Course Study which highlight the ways that parents' workforce participation is influenced by the values and preferences they hold for combining work and family life.

Diary of Social Legislation and Policy

The annual Diary, edited by Deborah Whithear, was published jointly with the Social Policy and Research Centre and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in mid-1997. The Diary summarised federal legislative and policy developments for 1996 in the areas of community and family services, education, employment and training, family law and policy, health, housing, immigration, and social security.

Youth Suicide Prevention Publications

A major publication has been released from the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy conducted by the Institute.

- *Youth Suicide Prevention: Programs and Activities: National Stocktake, March 1998*, compiled by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The results of this survey is a directory of youth-related suicide prevention programs and activities across all states and territories. This substantial publication comprises 352 A4-size pages, containing 853 entries, the survey questionnaire, and three indexes.

National Child Protection Clearing House Publications

Four publications emanated from the Institute-hosted National Child Protection Clearing House in 1997–98.

- Two attractive, reader-friendly newsletters contained information on the latest activities and resources in the area of child abuse prevention:

National Child Protection Clearing House Newsletter, vol.5, no.2, Spring 1997, by Judy Adams (24 pages).

National Child Protection Clearing House Newsletter, vol.6, no.1, Autumn 1998, compiled by Judy Adams (24 pages).

- Two issues papers addressed specific areas of enquiry:

Emotional Abuse: The Hidden Form of Maltreatment, Issues Paper no.8, Spring 1997, by Adam Tomison and Joe Tucci (16 pages).

Long-term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse, Issues Paper no.9, Autumn 1998, by Paul E. Mullen and Jillian Fleming (12 pages).

Works in Progress

During the year editorial work was completed on a major new book being prepared by the Institute for publication early in 1999 in conjunction with the publisher Allen & Unwin. *Social Change, Suburban Lives: An Australian Newtown 1960s–1990s*, by Lois Bryson and Institute researcher Ian Winter, provides a picture of change and continuity in suburban living, and explores the impact

of economic, social and political trends over the past 30 years in key areas such as employment, income and housing.

Commissioned Reports

A number of studies were completed in the course of 1997–98 resulting in the production of the following reports.

The Fiscal and Economic Costs of Child Maltreatment, in conjunction with the Office of Families and Children in South Australia, by Harry McGurk.

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect in New South Wales: Findings from a State Audit, New South Wales Child Protection Council, by Adam Tomison.

Overcoming Structural Barriers to the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect: A Discussion Paper, New South Wales Child Protection Council, by Adam Tomison.

Staffing

A significant change occurred in Publishing staffing during the year. With the resignation of the Assistant Editor in October, management decided to trial an arrangement whereby desktop publishing, proof reading and editing assistance is contracted out, or performed by consultants in-house.

Marketing and Communications

The Marketing and Communications unit promotes the Australian Institute of Family Studies to the community through the marketing and distribution of Institute research products, media liaison and public information dissemination, and through the administration and promotion of Institute conferences and seminars.

Institute Conference

Plans are well under way for the Institute's sixth Conference – *Changing Families, Challenging Futures* – to be held at the Carlton Crest Hotel in Melbourne between 25–27 November 1998.

With over 180 applications to present material, and 150 accepted for presentation, the program promises to be of interest to a wide range of people involved in family research, policy and service provision.

Two or three strongly represented sub-themes have emerged in the program. There will be a series of papers and symposia addressing the theme of family self-reliance and independence, and the changing nature of the welfare state as it relates to families. Other sub-themes are: the effects of divorce on family members; the balance between work and family in a rapidly changing labor market; and the impacts of change on rural and older families. Several presenters will address the issue of linking policy development to research and service delivery.

Media Liaison

The print and electronic media are a major forum for discussion of family issues in Australia. The media are an important means by which Institute research findings are communicated to the community. The Institute's Family Information Centre, researchers and the Marketing Manager are also key sources of information about families for the media

and act as a referral point to relevant agencies and researchers outside the Institute.

In 1997–98, media outlets made over 900 requests for information or comment from the Institute. More than 250 reports or articles which made use of Institute research findings and expertise were recorded in print and electronic media during the year.

Media coverage was evenly spread across all states and territories of Australia, and in regional as well as urban areas. The number of feature articles which drew upon Institute research and expertise grew during the year, with research in the areas of work and family and housing informing a number of ongoing discussions in the media.

The issues which generated the greatest number of media reports were: the work preferences of women with children; access to home ownership for young families; family values; marriage and cohabitation; child abuse; the costs of children; and the changing demographics of Australian families.

The release of each of three very strong editions of *Family Matters*, in April, August and December, and the publication in September of the *Briefing Paper* entitled 'Work and family values, preferences and practice', and, in March, the *Working Paper* entitled 'Social polarisation and housing careers', were the busiest times for media coverage. Each edition of *Family Matters* contained at least one, and in some cases several articles which generated a great deal of media interest, reports and radio interviews for Institute researchers.

Marketing and Distribution

The resumption of the Australian Family Briefing and Working Paper series saw the marketing and communications focus shift from sales to a wider distribution of free publications for much of 1997–98.

Publications revenue met budget expectations, thanks largely to continuing strong sales of last year's *Australian Family Profiles*. Total revenue from book sales was \$50,208.

Almost 4300 copies of each of the three editions of the Institute's journal *Family Matters* were distributed, with 3300 of these representing paid subscriptions. Total revenue from *Family Matters* was \$97,890.

It is hoped that circulation in 1998–99 will be boosted by interest in the Institute's Conference later this year, and also by the flow-on effects of the release of new publications throughout the year.

Family Information Centre

The objectives of the Family Information Centre (FIC) are to support the work of the Institute and provide a national information resource on the family by collecting family-related information and making it available as widely and cost-efficiently as possible.

The Institute's reference and research library specialises in issues impacting on the family. These include child development and psychology, family dynamics and relationships, divorce, family law, social justice, social problems, living standards, family economics and research methodology. The Family Information Centre hosts the National Child Protection Clearing House and holds a comprehensive collection on all aspects of child protection and child abuse prevention.

Family Information Centre Clients

The Family Information Centre supports the work and mission of the Institute, and is an important resource for the wider community. Clients include representatives of government and non-government organisations, policy makers and analysts, practitioners in the social service, medical and legal fields, researchers, teachers and students, and the media.

Collection and Catalogue

The Family Information Centre's catalogue is now searchable on the Internet, and therefore widely available. The library collection grew at a rate of over 200 items per month. Holdings (or interim records plus holdings) of all monographs, series publications and journals are added to the Australian Bibliographic Network where they are accessible to Australian libraries on the Network. The Institute is a full participant in the Australian Bibliographic Network, and contributes original

cataloguing to the Australian Bibliographic Network for that part of the collection not held by other libraries.

The version of the catalogue used by the Institute's staff consists of a database, one element of which is the traditional catalogue, and the second a database of international journal articles and book chapters. The database has been designed so that items can be downloaded to researchers' individual bibliographic databases.

Databases

Institute staff have desktop access to statistical, bibliographic and network-type information in in-house automated databases. These are complemented, when necessary, by literature searches of external databases.

Reference/Information Service

A reference and information service is provided to the general public during normal business hours. An appointment system is used for visitors to regulate service use and increase efficiency in service provision.

During 1997-98, a total of 2791 requests for information were received by the Information Service, the largest proportion being by phone (68 per cent). This figure represents a small increase in service use compared with the previous year. With the decentralising of access to products through their increased online availability via the Internet, direct use of the Family Information Centre is not expected to increase significantly.

Document Delivery

Document supply/delivery transactions for 1997–98 totalled 3275, a small increase from the previous year. As Australian libraries continue to cancel journal titles, commercial document delivery services are being used increasingly to provide materials to Institute staff. The Family Information Centre continues to function as a net lender to other libraries and 70 per cent of its transactions resulted from requests from other libraries. Of these, 53 per cent come from outside Victoria, reflecting the Institute's national focus.

Current Awareness

Institute researchers are kept abreast of the latest publications and developments in their respective research areas and are notified of new legislation and policy. Electronic current awareness services provide them with journals' tables of contents, and an email bulletin of new items received by the Family Information Centre is supplied monthly.

Internet

The Internet is now heavily relied upon as an information resource for reference and acquisitions, and as a medium for performing library functions and services, such as cataloguing and online searching.

Information Development

The role of the Information Development unit is to develop methods to facilitate information dissemination of Institute research and other Australian family research and information so that access is available to all Institute clients. Increasingly, the focus is on electronic means of dissemination for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness. The investigation and development of electronic resources to support Institute research activities is also an aspect of this unit's work.

Activities which have been designed to achieve these objectives during the 1997–98 year are: the continued production and dissemination of the Institute's database *Australian Family & Society Abstracts*; the ongoing compilation of *Family Thesaurus*; the coordination and production of the annual *Diary of Social Legislation and Policy*; the development and maintenance of databases special projects; the continuing development of the Institute's World Wide Web site and sites for the National Child Protection Clearing House and the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy Communication Project; the development and publishing of the second edition of the *Australian Family Resources CD-ROM* in association with RMIT Publishing.

Australian Family & Society Abstracts

The Institute's *Australian Family & Society Abstracts* (AF&SA) database project began in 1983 with the aim of providing Australia-wide and international access to information and research on Australian family issues. The database is a computer-based index to the research, policy and practice literature about Australian families and the social issues that affect them.

Australian Family & Society Abstracts is now an established information resource in the social sciences and one of a number of national bibliographic databases which together provide access to Australia's research literature. Public access to AF&SA is available on the National Library's Ozline online service

of research databases; Australian social sciences CD-ROM, AUSTRUM; US Family Studies Database CD-ROM; and the National Information Services Corporation Biblioline Internet service.

During the year the Institute was invited to submit subject specific subsets from the database to two new RMIT Publishing CD-ROM products: AustHealth, which includes the Australian Medical Index and other health related databases; and ATSI ROM, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CD-ROM.

In addition to the routine maintenance requirements of the database, a major revamp of the 'date fields' has been achieved this year to accommodate the year 2000. In databases like AF&SA, 'date fields' allow a range of operations including refining subject searches to particular time periods, recording the date a record was entered, or when modifications should be notified to external providers.

Database Development

Database work has fallen into two categories. First, the creation of new databases, and second, the tailoring of existing databases for online access from the Institute's web site. New databases have been developed for the Youth Suicide Prevention Communication Project Stocktake and for the analysis of the Stocktake, and a separate database has been created for the full text of Institute publications (previously part of AF&SA). Databases made available for searching from the Institute's web site

are the research library catalogue, the National Child Protection Clearing House Programs database and the Youth Suicide Prevention Programs and Activities database.

Diary of Social Legislation and Policy

The final volume of the annual *Diary of Social Legislation and Policy* was published in 1997 bringing to the end a publishing project which has involved the contributions and cooperation of a number of Australian social science research centres over the past 17 years. Budgetary restrictions and competing demands on staff time have made commitment to the project for some organisations increasingly difficult, to a point where the project could no longer continue.

The purpose of the *Diary* was to record changes and developments made during the preceding year relating to the development of new policy and legislation, funding of government programs, and recommendations for changes in policy and legislation from reviews, inquiries and commissioned research.

From its inception in 1980 the *Diary* was produced as a cooperative venture. The initial partners were the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, Melbourne University, the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales and the Australian Institute of Family Studies. In 1995 the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (which had taken over from IAESR) withdrew from the partnership and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare took its place. Costs of printing the *Diary* were shared by the partners and in the early years the partners contributed all the chapters. In more recent years chapters have been compiled by other research centres including the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, the Centre for Labour Studies at the University of Adelaide, and the Australian Council for Educational Research.

From an historic perspective it is regrettable to see the *Diary* project come to an end after 17 years. However, during that period the development of electronic dissemination of information has created alternative options for monitoring social policy and legislation. Increasingly government departments at federal and state levels have a presence on the Internet and many are now offering policy papers, reports, budget statements and media releases. As a consequence, the Institute's Web Development staff are exploring alternative approaches for monitoring social policy and legislation drawing on resources of the Internet.

Internet Project

The Institute's Web site was established in March 1996 (<http://www.aifs.org.au>). This is an ongoing project and a means of reporting on the Institute's programs and activities, of disseminating information from its databases, publications and resource collections, and promoting the development of networks with other organisations concerned with family research and policy.

New developments during the 1997–98 year have been: a weekly current journal abstracts service from the *Australian Family & Society Abstracts* database; access to three searchable databases; information about the Institute's November 1998 family research conference and an interactive form for conference paper proposals; a directory of Australian and International organisations concerned with child abuse prevention; a Child and Family Electronic Dictionary; regularly updated listings of forthcoming conferences, seminars, courses and training on family related topics; and a 'links' page which identifies useful Internet sites world wide to support the work of the Institute and others involved in family research and policy. An average of approximately 1200 visitors per month have accessed the site.

A web site has been developed for the National Youth Suicide Prevention

Strategy Communication Project (<http://www.aifs.org.au/external/ysp/>). The site offers information on State strategies, updates from the Commonwealth Strategy, statistics, bibliographies, links to other Australian and overseas web sites, a mailing list form, telephone help numbers in Australia and other countries, forthcoming conferences and seminars, access to the Stocktake database, and an email discussion list for people working to prevent youth suicide.

The Institute's involvement in the Children's House in Cyberspace project has continued with responsibility for developing and updating the Information Resources page in the Children's House (<http://childhouse.uio.no>). From October 1997 the page has been loaded on the Institute's server thus eliminating the need to send updates to Childwatch International in Norway and facilitating more regular updating.

Australian Family Resources on CD-ROM

Following the success of the *Australian Family Resources on CD-ROM* published in 1994, contributions were invited for a second edition to be published in association with RMIT Publishing in May 1998.

The CD-ROM contains a searchable database of more than 1000 citations

and abstracts with attached full text images of journal articles, research and discussion papers, policy submissions and fact sheets. Other features include publications from the National Child Protection Clearing House and the Child Abuse Prevention Programs database; the full text of the Institute's demographic report *Australian Family Profiles*, and a collection of useful family research and policy Web sites which can be activated directly from the CD-ROM.

The purpose of the original CD-ROM compiled in the International Year of the Family was to highlight the work of a number of Australian organisations working to support children and families. This focus is continued in the second edition and, in addition to the Institute, contributing organisations are: Australian Council of Social Service; Australian Institute of Criminology; Brotherhood of St Laurence; Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University; Council on the Ageing (Australia); Family Life Movement of Australia; Family Planning Association of NSW; National Child Protection Clearing House; Oz Child; National Children's Bureau of Australia; School of Behavioural Health Sciences, La Trobe University; Youth Action and Policy Association (NSW); and, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria.

National Child Protection Clearing House

The Mission of the National Child Protection Clearing House is to help create an environment which helps families and communities care for and protect children.

The National Child Protection Clearing House is an informational and advisory resource on child abuse prevention, child protection and associated family violence, and forms the hub of a network of people concerned about preventing child abuse and neglect.

In a two-way relationship with the community concerned with child abuse and neglect, and its prevention, the National Clearing House collects, shares, monitors and distributes information and resources on the latest developments in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Primary target groups are those with a major interest in child abuse prevention, such as policy makers and analysts, those working with 'at risk' or abused children and their families, and researchers. Other target groups are those with a secondary interest in child abuse prevention, such as teachers, doctors and students.

There are four major Clearing House functions – repository, databases, networking/outreach and advisory.

Repository

Professionals in the field of child abuse and neglect prevention need access to the best and latest information to help them with their work. To satisfy this objective, the Clearing House compiles and catalogues a comprehensive collection that reflects current research, publication and thinking on child abuse prevention.

The following acquisition strategies are vigorously pursued. All Australian materials related to the topic (such as books, reports, journals, newsletters and videos) are collected. All overseas English language journals/newsletters with a sub-

stantial focus on child abuse prevention are acquired. Materials are acquired in all formats – books, manuals, periodicals, audio-visual material, and electronic.

Currently the Clearing House holds over 3000 items directly related to child abuse/neglect. Details of all materials acquired are added to an online catalogue, which is accessible to visitors to the Institute and to visitors to the Institute's Internet site. Users of the advisory service are supplied with print-outs of catalogue sections on demand. A regular current awareness feature detailing new acquisitions appears in the *National Child Protection Newsletter*.

Databases

To enable information about child abuse prevention materials to be widely disseminated, details are added to the Institute's *Australian Family & Society Abstracts Database* which holds over 3000 fully abstracted database items directly related to the child abuse/neglect area, and more items of indirect relevance.

In addition, two in-house databases are maintained. The first is *Child Abuse Prevention Programs*, a record of current Australian child abuse prevention programs, which now contains 626 items. The database was expanded during the last year by the addition of information on New South Wales programs provided by the NSW Child Protection Council; in consequence, the New South Wales component of the database is now the most comprehensive and sets the benchmark for the level of coverage to be achieved for other states. The second in-house database is *Research-in-Progress*, which holds 51 items on research currently addressing child abuse and neglect.

Access to in-house databases is provided in a number of ways: first, the Programs database is mounted on the Internet site; second, clients without Internet access may ring the NCH advisory service for customised printouts from the databases; third, visitors to the Institute may search the databases on a computer terminal; and fourth, the databases will be included in the new CD-ROM being prepared by the Institute – *Australian Family Resources* (2nd edition).

Networking and Outreach

The networking/outreach function links clients with the Clearing House's informational resources and with each other. The network has grown to 4281 during this year.

With the literature on child abuse prevention growing exponentially, the Clearing House fulfils an important role by analysing and summarising much of this material in manageable and intelligible 'bites' in its various publications. Publications are produced in both traditional paper and various electronic formats, and each year two Newsletters and two Issues Papers are published and distributed free to clients.

An Internet site has been established for the Clearing House, with features including the full text of all Clearing House publications, dates for forthcoming conferences, regularly updated bibliographies on the topic, and access to the Child Abuse Prevention Programs Database. The Internet site has been accessed 3434 times over the year.

Advisory Function

General queries are handled by the Family Information Centre with an information desk staffed during office hours to answer queries by telephone, fax, mail, email, or in person. Requests for more specialised information are referred to the Research Advisor. This service is well used with over 500 requests for advice/information during the year.

Analysis of records confirms that the service is used most intensively by the primary Clearing House target groups – government officers, helping professionals, and researchers – in the following proportions: helping organisations 32.1 per cent; government officers 24.5 per cent; researchers/academics 23.6 per cent; students 10.3 per cent; other 4.4 per cent; and media 4.1 per cent.

Research Advisor

Mr Adam Tomison, the Research Advisor for the National Child Protection Clearing House, is a researcher specialising in the field of child abuse prevention, child abuse and associated family violence. The Research Advisor role provides research direction to all Clearing House activities. In particular, the Research Advisor writes the majority of the Clearing House publications produced each year, and has primary responsibility for the networking/outreach and advisory functions. To that end specialist advice and information is provided to all levels of government, the academic community, non-government agencies, community organisations, members of the helping professions, students and the general public. This includes, linking individuals and agencies with similar interests, the development of comprehensive literature searches, detailed analysis and interpretation of current issues in child abuse prevention, informing program development and current practice, and providing advice on research methodology and program evaluations.

As part of the networking/outreach function the Research Advisor provides a visible presence at numerous workshops, conferences and related activities, presenting papers and seminars upon request. Further, the Research Advisor sits, in various capacities, on a number of state-based and national advisory groups and committees committed to child abuse prevention or the improvement of the current child protection system.

Proposed Future Developments

To enhance visibility and to bring representation of other states and territories into line with that of New South Wales, the Clearing House plans to carry out a large-scale national audit of child abuse prevention programs.

An effective way for professionals in any field to network, is by participating in an Internet discussion list, in which issues are explored, enquiries are made and responses are given. The Clearing House

proposes to establish such a list for Australian workers in the field of child abuse prevention.

A further appropriate role for the Clearing House would be for the development and promotion of appropriate evaluation strategies and the subsequent dissemination of best practice information. This strategy would be aimed particularly at the non-government agencies and larger community groups who are currently providing, or plan to provide, some form of child abuse prevention activity.

National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy: Communication Project

As part of the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, the Commonwealth Government has engaged the Australian Institute of Family Studies to address the information and communication needs of those involved in youth suicide prevention. The Project includes National Stocktakes of Youth Suicide Prevention Activities, a Communications Strategy, a Clearinghouse role and an Evaluation of the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Stocktakes of Youth Suicide Prevention Activities

In collaboration with representatives from state and territory health and community services departments, the Australian Institute of Family Studies conducted a national stocktake of youth suicide prevention activities within Commonwealth and State government, non-government and private sectors.

Stocktake information was entered into a database, which now contains data on more than 850 programs or activities Australia wide. Title, organisation responsible, contact person, funding, target group, geographic area and description are provided for each program. The database was made available on the Institute's Internet site in January 1998, and is being updated with additions or modifications as necessary throughout 1998. A published version of the Stocktake was distributed to participants and to selected stakeholders. The stocktake will be repeated in early 1999.

Communications Strategy

The first step in developing a communications strategy was an information needs analysis to determine how information might best be delivered to stakeholders.

Information Audit

An informational brochure/questionnaire was developed, to inform interested

people about the Communications Project, to compile a mailing list, and to use for an audit of information needs. The project was advertised in the major newspapers in each state and in Internet discussion lists. A brochure/questionnaire was sent to those responding, and to relevant mailing lists, resulting in approximately 900 responses to the information audit and a mailing list of over 4000 people wishing to be kept informed of developments in the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Based on this information needs analysis, the Institute project team developed a communications strategy implemented between January 1998 and June 1999, with the following components.

Briefing Papers

Logo and design elements were developed for use in hard copy and electronic publications. A series of briefing papers on topics related to youth suicide prevention have been planned as a vehicle for publishing substantial articles, news of developments in the field, notices of coming events and details of new publications.

Internet site

A YSP Internet site has been established and will be updated as new information becomes available. The site has been visited over 12,000 times since 17 July 1997. Features include: the National Stocktake of Suicide Prevention

Activities; details of the youth suicide prevention strategies of the states and territories; links to telephone counselling services for young people; links to other sites; bibliographies; forthcoming conferences; links to research organisations; national and international resources; and updates of progress on the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Discussion list

An email discussion list has been developed to promote the exchange of information between academics, professionals and researchers with an interest in youth suicide prevention. Topics for discussion may include research issues, projects and methodology, development of intervention programs, best practice in youth suicide prevention, and standard approaches to youth health and young people in crisis or at risk of suicide, notices about upcoming conferences and workshops, and pointers to new publications, online papers, resources/links, and web sites. The list is also used to raise questions, share problems and relate concerns.

Seminars

A program of seminars has been developed, with the aims of: first, bringing together people who have been involved, or have an interest in, youth suicide prevention in particular settings, to share experiences and exchange information;

and second, collecting information about ways in which suicide can be more effectively prevented among young people in these settings. The first two seminars have been held, one focusing on the juvenile justice area, and the second on rural areas.

Clearing House Function

The Institute has established a clearing house service for youth suicide prevention information. The aim is for a two-way involvement with the community concerned with youth suicide prevention, and interested persons have been invited to contribute articles, news items, and notices about conferences and communications activities. The Institute is also distributing regular updates on the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy prepared by the Mental Health Branch of the Department of Health and Family Services, as well as publications emanating from the Strategy.

Evaluation

The Institute is responsible for undertaking an overall evaluation of the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy to be completed by October 1999. An evaluation plan has been developed, accepted, and is being implemented.